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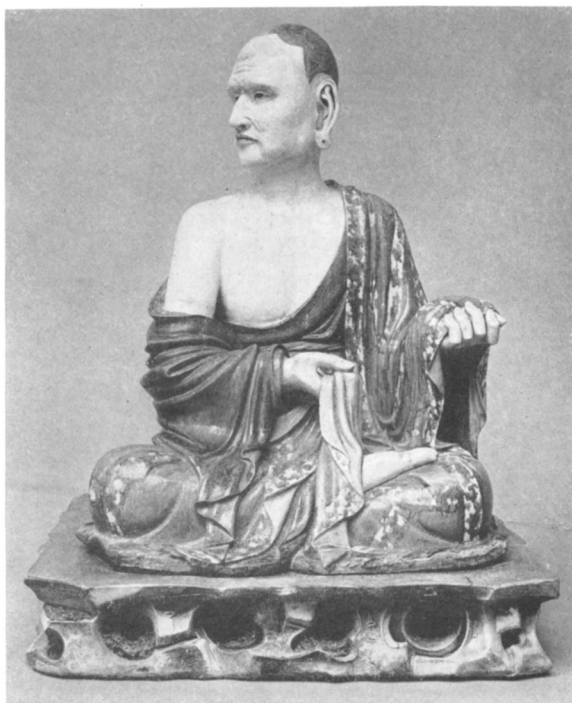
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A LARGE POTTERY LOHAN OF THE T'ANG PERIOD

ABOUT seven years ago the British Museum acquired an over-life-size Chinese pottery figure which created quite a sensation. It is a Lohan sitting on a stand in the shape of a slice of perforated rock, also of pottery. The thoughtful, dignified

Japan have similar ones; and four others are owned by private collectors and dealers. In all ten are known besides a great many small fragments, several hands and feet, and baskets full of broken pieces. In consequence there must have been originally the usual series of sixteen Lohans, the sixteen disciples of Buddha, humans who had reached the end of the eight-fold path, who



ONE OF THE SIXTEEN LOHANS OR
DISCIPLES OF BUDDHA
CHINESE POTTERY FIGURE, 618-906 A. D.

attitude of the well-modeled figure is splendid; technically it is most remarkable as a colossal piece of pottery covered with the usual T'ang glazes. Since this figure came to light several others, originally belonging to the same series, have appeared; the Metropolitan Museum acquired the one reproduced here, which has now been put on exhibition; the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the University Museum in Philadelphia, the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, and the Matsukata Collection in

had attained perfection and enlightenment; they were sometimes represented in a group of eight and spoken of as the eight Lohans. The Chinese habit of using numerals to indicate quantity instead of the exact number, like thousand for a great many, may explain why the mountain near Ichou, southwest of Peking, where the Lohans stood in caves, was called the Eight Lohan Mountain though it harbored sixteen saints.

Soon after the appearance of the first Lohan, the explorer Friedrich Perzynski

set out on what he calls his "hunt for gods." He described his expedition, which was a partial failure, in the *Deutsche Rundschau* and lately republished the same account in his book "*Von Chinas Göttern*." Though he managed to find and to get access to two grottoes of the Eight Lohan Mountain, in one of which he found broken remains of the lately removed figures, he saw only one broken Lohan which had been taken from the robbers by the Chinese local police and which was jealously guarded in a neighboring yamen or government building. But his expedition was archaeologically a success because he located the place where the pottery figures came from and found two interesting inscriptions.

One was outside a grotto nearby, which contained the pottery remains of a colossal standing figure of Kuan Yin. In typical Chinese verse, poetic but not very clear, it says: "All these Buddhas come from far." This has been taken to mean that in times of religious strife, perhaps the ninth century when many Buddhist temples were destroyed, these figures were brought to the lonely caves for safe-keeping. It may also mean that the master potter who made and was able to fire these colossal figures lived far away, that it was a long and difficult task to transport them to these caves, difficult of access. I am inclined to take this more sober view, for the Eight Lohan Mountain suggests to me a holy place difficult of access with many caves containing the sacred figures, who like hermits in their retreat were visited in turn by the pious pilgrims. Perzynski tells us that, according to the information he gained, the mountain contained several more caves which he was unable to visit or considered unnecessary to see because all the figures had been removed or broken in the attempt.

The second inscription was found over the altar of a large cave in the Lohan mountain, a place where his guide assured him that he had seen three pottery Lohans a few months before. It says that the shrine was restored by pious hands during the reign of the Emperor Cheng-tê of the Ming dynasty, that is, in the beginning of the

sixteenth century. There is plenty of evidence of these restorations.

The head of the Lohan in the Metropolitan Museum, which had been broken off, was replaced and fastened on by the solid metal rivets with which we find so many Ming porcelains have been repaired. Of the ten Lohans known, five only have their original heads, one has the mask only, three have heads of reddish clay covered with a carefully applied slip and green glaze—these heads have been fired upside down—one has no head at all. The restored heads and some hands found amongst the broken pieces have every appearance of having been made in the Ming time; they are probably part of the restoration recorded on the stone over the altar. The head of the Lohan which the Museum owns is original; some parts of the figure have been repaired but except for small unimportant pieces nothing is missing.

The figure is that of a youngish man with an earnest, strong face; the chest and the right shoulder are bare; he wears over a dark green robe an orange-yellow Buddhist priest's robe made up of small pieces because priests make vows of poverty and therefore wear patched clothes. The robe is lined with yellow and has a border of brocade made of yellow, white, and green running into each other without definite design, the egg and spinach pattern typical of the T'ang pottery glazes.

The figure is made of rather coarse, gritty clay with an outer coating of finer and whiter clay about a quarter of an inch thick. Very curious is it that these figures were built upon a framework of iron which did not disappear in the comparatively small heat that the soft lead glazes required; inside the figure the thin iron supports are plainly visible, though in places the iron has rusted away entirely.

From the artist's standpoint the Lohan is a very strong piece of modeling, very realistic in treatment with an earnest, almost severe expression. The head is large and very much turned to the right, the hands are particularly beautiful.

S. C. B. R.